



Executive Director, News and Media Relations

Leadership Profile

October 2026



Executive Summary

The University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) seeks an experienced, forward-looking, and strategic news and media relations leader to serve as its next Executive Director, News and Media Relations, and help shape the voice, visibility, and reputation of one of the world's premier health sciences institutions. Reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Communications and serving as a key member of the Office of Communications leadership team, this role is responsible for leading news and media relations strategies at the intersection of biomedical discovery, academic excellence, patient care, public service, and institutional strategy. Every day, UCSF advances breakthrough science, delivers world-class clinical care, educates the next generation of health professionals, and addresses some of society's most pressing health challenges. The Executive Director will help ensure these stories and their impact are understood by audiences locally, nationally, and globally.

UCSF stands among the world's most influential health sciences institutions, distinguished by a singular focus on improving human health through discovery, education, and care. As the nation's leading public university devoted exclusively to the health sciences, UCSF brings together world-renowned scientists, clinicians, educators, and learners in a uniquely collaborative environment where groundbreaking research is rapidly translated into advances that benefit patients and communities worldwide. Led by Chancellor Sam Hawgood, UCSF is home to top-ranked schools of Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy; a thriving graduate education enterprise; and one of the nation's premier academic health systems. With more than 36,000 faculty and staff, a broad network of hospitals and clinical sites, and a research enterprise that consistently ranks among the world's leading recipients of National Institutes of Health funding, UCSF is at the forefront of advances in cancer, neuroscience, genomics, precision medicine, infectious disease, aging, stem cell biology, and many other fields shaping the future of medicine. The institution is also home to six Nobel laureates whose discoveries have transformed understanding of cancer, neuroscience, aging, stem cells, and pain sensation. United by a public mission and a culture of intellectual rigor, innovation, and service, UCSF continues to shape the future of health and medicine on a global scale.

This is an exceptional opportunity for a strategic communications leader to elevate UCSF's news and media relations function amid extraordinary advances in health science and technology and an increasingly complex public environment. UCSF is expanding its impact through innovation, biotechnology partnerships, and groundbreaking scientific discoveries that are transforming lives. At the same time, the institution is navigating a rapidly evolving environment that includes changes in federal research funding, policy debates affecting higher education and health care, growing public scrutiny, increasing convergence of research and clinical care, and heightened expectations for institutional transparency and accountability. The next Executive Director will build on a strong foundation while helping further evolve the function as a sophisticated, proactive news and media relations enterprise, strengthening UCSF's influence, visibility, and leadership in health sciences.

The successful candidate will be an accomplished communications leader and executive who has built, developed, and inspired high-performing teams while advancing organizational priorities through news storytelling, media relations, reputation management, and strategic communications. UCSF seeks an individual with the executive presence, strategic judgment, and leadership sophistication to thrive within one of the nation's leading academic health sciences enterprises. This individual will bring a nuanced understanding of the intersections among biomedical research, patient care, education, public policy, and institutional reputation. Equally important, the next Executive Director will be a trusted advisor who will counsel the Vice Chancellor of Communications and other senior leaders through high-profile opportunities, emerging issues, and moments of reputational risk.

UCSF seeks a collaborative, mission-driven leader who embodies the institution's values of professionalism, respect, integrity, diversity, and excellence. The ideal candidate will lead with authenticity, humility, transparency, and accountability while inspiring teams and partners through periods of change and growth. They will possess the resilience, flexibility, and emotional intelligence to navigate ambiguity, build trust across a highly matrixed

environment, and influence stakeholders with differing priorities. This leader will bring a contemporary communications mindset, a passion for innovation, and the ability to help evolve UCSF's news and media relations function into a more proactive, integrated, and strategically aligned enterprise function. They will be equally comfortable engaging world-renowned faculty, health system executives, cabinet leaders, and communications professionals, bringing the credibility, vision, and collaborative leadership required to further elevate UCSF's reputation and impact on a national and global stage.

For more information on how to apply, express interest in the role, or nominate a colleague, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.

Role of the Executive Director, News and Media Relations

Reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Communications, the Executive Director, News and Media Relations, will serve as the senior leader responsible for advancing and protecting the reputation of UCSF through a comprehensive news and media relations function that contributes to, and collaborates with, the Office of Communications' strategic communications, issues and crisis management, internal/executive communications, and brand strategy efforts. The Executive Director will serve as a key member of the Office of Communications' leadership team, which operates through a collaborative leadership model that values dialogue and partnership. Equally important, we seek an Executive Director who is committed to fostering a team culture that supports professional growth, accountability, and high impact.

The Executive Director will serve as a trusted advisor to the Vice Chancellor, Chancellor, senior university leaders, health system executives, deans, faculty, and other institutional stakeholders, providing strategic counsel on media engagement, reputation management, executive visibility, crisis communications, and complex issues at the intersection of healthcare, science, higher education, and public policy. As one of the institution's principal communications leaders, this individual will help shape and articulate UCSF's narrative to local, national, and global audiences while ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and values.

The role will lead and develop a high-performing team of 12 communications professionals in earned and owned media through a team of managers, setting clear expectations, building leadership capacity, supporting professional development and succession planning efforts, and fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement.

The role requires a leader who can identify and elevate compelling stories that demonstrate UCSF's leadership in biomedical discovery, clinical innovation, health equity, education, and community impact while effectively navigating a dynamic and increasingly complex media landscape. The Executive Director will play a critical role in strengthening UCSF's visibility, influence, and public engagement during a period of significant opportunity and change for academic medicine and higher education. Working collaboratively across a highly matrixed organization, this leader will build strong partnerships throughout UCSF Health, the schools and graduate division, research enterprises, and administrative units to advance integrated communications strategies that enhance institutional reputation and stakeholder trust. Success in the role will require exceptional judgment, political acumen, relationship-building skills, and the ability to balance strategic vision with operational excellence.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

- **Elevate UCSF's Global Reputation and Public Voice**

Lead the development and execution of integrated news and media relations strategies that position UCSF as the nation's leading academic health sciences institution and a trusted authority on health, science, research, and public policy. The Executive Director will help broaden awareness of UCSF's impact across research, education, patient care, and public service by increasing visibility among national media outlets, policymakers,

industry leaders, donors, and the public. Particular emphasis will be placed on elevating the integration of UCSF's mission, communicating how our educational, biomedical research, and care delivery missions drive scientific discovery and advance human health.

- **Champion the Story of Discovery, Innovation, and Impact**

Develop compelling narratives that communicate the extraordinary work occurring across UCSF's laboratories, classrooms, hospitals, clinics, and community programs. The Executive Director will partner with faculty, researchers, clinicians, and institutional leaders to showcase breakthrough discoveries, translational science, innovation, genomics, biotechnology collaborations, commercialization efforts, and other advances that demonstrate UCSF's role in improving health worldwide. This leader will continue to expand UCSF's reach through innovative storytelling, digital platforms, multimedia content, and emerging communications channels, helping to translate complex science into narratives that resonate with diverse audiences. The Executive Director will help evaluate and responsibly integrate emerging communications technologies, including AI-enabled tools, to strengthen storytelling, audience engagement, operational effectiveness, and strategic decision-making.

- **Develop a Comprehensive and Proactive Media Strategy**

Lead the continued maturation of UCSF's media relations and thought leadership capabilities by developing an integrated strategy that aligns institutional priorities with evolving news cycles and audience interests. Working in partnership with senior leaders across UCSF Health, the schools, research enterprise, and central administration, the Executive Director will identify opportunities to proactively elevate UCSF's expertise, discoveries, and impact throughout the year. This leader will strengthen UCSF's ability to shape conversations, position faculty and executives as thought leaders, and ensure the institution's stories are communicated through the most effective mix of earned, owned, shared, and emerging channels. In partnership with colleagues across the organization, the Executive Director will also oversee UCSF's editorial strategy and institutional storytelling efforts, ensuring that owned and earned media channels work together to elevate UCSF's reputation and amplify its impact.

- **Advance UCSF's News and Media Relations Priorities in a Complex and Dynamic Environment**

Provide enterprise-level leadership on high-profile issues involving news and media relations that affect the institution's reputation, mission, and stakeholders. Working closely with university and health system leaders, and in collaboration with the Strategic Communications team, the Executive Director will develop proactive communications strategies addressing issues such as federal research funding challenges, public policy developments, labor-related matters, academic and health care issues, and other emerging risks and opportunities. Success will require balancing rapid response with long-term reputation management while helping leaders navigate increasingly complex communications challenges with clarity, confidence, and strategic foresight.

The Executive Director will help advance UCSF's continued evolution toward a more proactive and programmatic approach to reputation building. This leader will identify opportunities to shape public dialogue, align communications strategies with institutional priorities, and establish longer-term editorial and media relations roadmaps that position UCSF ahead of emerging issues and news cycles.

- **Strengthen Integration Across a Highly Matrixed Enterprise**

Serve as a trusted strategist and convener across UCSF's complex communications landscape, fostering alignment among the Office of Communications, UCSF Health, the schools and graduate division, campus leadership, development and alumni relations, community and government relations, legal counsel, and other key stakeholders. The Executive Director will help create a coordinated, audience-centered approach to news and media relations that reflects the reality that patients, media, policymakers, and the public experience UCSF as a single institution. This leader will play a critical role in strengthening collaboration, improving decision-making, clarifying priorities, and ensuring consistent messaging across the enterprise while maintaining the flexibility needed to serve diverse constituencies and missions.

Success in this role will require exceptional influence and relationship-building skills. UCSF's decentralized environment brings together leaders with diverse priorities, perspectives, and expectations. The Executive Director will serve as a translator, facilitator, and strategic advisor who can help stakeholders identify shared goals and develop communications strategies that advance institutional objectives while addressing the needs of individual schools, units, and leaders. The ability to operate effectively in ambiguity, build consensus, and maintain trust across complex stakeholder groups will be essential.

▪ **Lead the Transformation of a Modern News and Media Relations Function**

Lead, mentor, and inspire a talented team of communications professionals while guiding the continued evolution of UCSF's news and media relations functions. Building on a strong foundation, the Executive Director will help establish greater clarity around priorities, roles, workflows, and decision-making while fostering a culture characterized by collaboration, accountability, innovation, and continuous learning.

The successful leader will help the team embrace a more strategic and programmatic approach to media relations, storytelling, and reputation management. This includes evaluating how resources are deployed, identifying opportunities to strengthen integrated and multi-channel communications, and ensuring the organization is positioned to meet the demands of a rapidly changing media and communications landscape. Working with colleagues across communications and marketing, the Executive Director will help foster new ways of thinking and working while balancing the pace of change with UCSF's collaborative culture.

This leader will also champion thoughtful modernization of systems, processes, and tools that enable the team to operate more effectively and strategically. The Executive Director will bring a systems-oriented mindset, a willingness to experiment and learn, and the ability to identify practical solutions within a highly complex environment. A demonstrated capacity to lead organizational change with compassion, persistence, and clarity will be critical.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

UCSF seeks a highly accomplished, mission-driven communications leader who combines strategic vision, sound judgment, political acumen, and exceptional leadership skills with a focus on collaboration and team development. The successful candidate will bring a demonstrated record of advancing organizational reputation through earned and owned media, leading enterprise communications initiatives, and advising senior executives in complex, high-visibility environments. This individual will possess the credibility and influence necessary to serve as a trusted counselor to institutional leadership while building strong partnerships across a large, highly matrixed academic health sciences enterprise.

In addition, the Executive Director will demonstrate most, if not all, of the following:

Required Experience

- Ten or more years of progressively responsible leadership experience in communications, media relations, journalism, government affairs, external relations, or a related field.
- Demonstrated success in developing and implementing enterprise-wide communications and media relations strategies that advance organizational goals and priorities.
- Significant experience serving as a strategic communications advisor to senior executives and organizational leadership.
- Experience leading media relations programs, including proactive media outreach, executive visibility efforts, thought leadership initiatives, and managing relationships with key media outlets.
- Demonstrated experience managing complex issues, crisis communications, and high-profile reputational challenges.
- Experience leading and developing communications teams within large, complex organizations.
- Experience collaborating across multiple stakeholder groups and navigating highly matrixed organizational environments.
- Demonstrated success communicating complex scientific, healthcare, research, policy, or technical issues to broad and diverse audiences.

Education Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, public affairs, public policy, marketing, healthcare administration, business administration, or a related field from an accredited institution.
- An advanced degree in communications, journalism, public affairs, public policy, business administration, healthcare administration, or a related discipline is preferred.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Expert knowledge of media relations, public affairs, strategic communications, reputation management, issues management, and crisis communications within complex organizations.
- Deep understanding of the evolving media landscape, including traditional, digital, social, and emerging communications channels, as well as the opportunities and challenges they present for institutional reputation and audience engagement.

- Exceptional ability to develop and execute comprehensive news and media relations strategies that advance organizational priorities, support executive leadership, and strengthen institutional visibility and influence.
- Demonstrated skill in cultivating and maintaining productive relationships with reporters, editors, producers, influencers, and other external stakeholders at the local, regional, national, and international levels.
- Demonstrated success leading through managers and developing leadership capacity within complex organizations.
- Ability to build, mentor, and retain high-performing teams while fostering a culture of accountability, collaboration, and professional growth.
- Outstanding written, verbal, presentation, and interpersonal communication skills, with the ability to translate complex scientific, healthcare, research, and policy-related information into clear, compelling, and accessible messages for diverse audiences.
- Strong executive presence and the ability to serve as a trusted advisor to senior leaders on sensitive, high-profile, and rapidly evolving communications matters.
- Expertise in issues management, crisis communications, and reputational risk mitigation, including the ability to anticipate challenges, provide sound counsel, and lead effective response strategies.
- Ability to lead through influence in a highly matrixed and decentralized environment, building consensus and fostering productive partnerships across diverse stakeholder groups.
- Strong organizational, project management, and operational skills, with the ability to manage multiple priorities, allocate resources effectively, and execute communications initiatives in a fast-paced environment.
- Demonstrated commitment to data-informed decision making, including the use of analytics, audience insights, and performance metrics to evaluate effectiveness and guide strategy.
- Proven ability to recruit, develop, mentor, and retain high-performing communications professionals while fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, inclusion, and continuous improvement.
- Knowledge of issues affecting academic medicine, healthcare delivery, biomedical research, higher education, public health, and government policy.

UCSF Office of Communications

The [UCSF Office of Communications](#) advances the University's mission by building trust, strengthening reputation, and inspiring engagement through strategic communications. The team partners across UCSF and UCSF Health to tell compelling stories, elevate institutional leadership, support executive communications, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and position UCSF as a global leader in health sciences, patient care, education, and biomedical discovery. Through integrated communications, media relations, digital strategy, internal communications, and content development, the Office of Communications helps amplify UCSF's impact and advance its mission of improving health worldwide.

The Office of Communications encompasses several interconnected functions, including Public Affairs (News and Media Relations), Brand Strategy, Internal Communications, Strategic Communications and Content Strategy, and Central Operations. Together, these teams advance and protect UCSF's reputation, steward and strengthen the UCSF brand, promote thought leadership, engage key internal and external audiences, and increase awareness of the University's contributions to research, education, patient care, and public service. The office

serves as a strategic partner to institutional leadership, helping communicate UCSF's priorities, navigate complex issues, and foster meaningful connections with stakeholders locally, nationally, and globally.

Leadership

Won Ha, Vice Chancellor of Communications



Won Ha was appointed UCSF's Vice Chancellor of Communications in August 2019. He oversees the development and implementation of multichannel communications programs to champion UCSF's mission of advancing health worldwide. Ha is a member of the chancellor's executive team and cabinet, serving as lead counsel on internal and external communications, including issues and crisis management. He is also counsel to the UCSF Board of Directors.

Ha oversees the Office of Communications' integrated strategies across all media and channels to increase awareness and support of UCSF's mission, vision, and strategic priorities among its diverse internal and external constituencies. The Office of Communications serves as the official voice of UCSF and UCSF Health to regional, state, national, and international news media.

Prior to joining UCSF, Ha served as Vice President of Strategic Communications at the Energy Foundation, which directed one out of every three climate philanthropy dollars in the United States. He served as a senior advisor to the foundation's advocacy allies, grantees, donors, and philanthropic partners, including the Hewlett Foundation, Packard Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Tempest Advisors. During his tenure, he established the first-ever preemptive issues management program in climate change and clean energy advocacy and a regional communications network that integrated the strategic communications work of advocacy organizations across 20 states.

Ha previously served as Executive Director of Issues and Brand Management at Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest nonprofit health plan and hospital systems. In that role, he advised C-suite executives and their leadership teams on issues and crisis management strategies spanning health care reform, government relations, and business operations, including clinical and labor issues.

Ha has also held communications roles at Wells Fargo, Gap Inc., and Genentech. He previously worked as a news producer in radio journalism.

He attended UC Berkeley, where he earned an M.A. in History and a B.A. in Rhetoric.

About the University of California, San Francisco

Overview

At UC San Francisco (UCSF), the best research, the best teaching, and the best patient care come together to deliver breakthroughs that help heal the world. UCSF is the leading university dedicated exclusively to the health sciences and is widely recognized for excellence in biomedical research, graduate-level education, and patient care.

As part of the 10-campus University of California system, UCSF is the only UC campus dedicated solely to graduate and professional education in the health sciences. Driven by its public mission, UCSF brings together scientists, clinicians, students, and staff who are committed to improving health and transforming lives. The institution is recognized worldwide for its biomedical research and for leadership across a broad range of

disciplines, including genomics, immunology, neuroscience, cancer research, and specialty clinical care. UCSF's hospitals and educational programs consistently rank among the nation's best.

UCSF fosters a culture of innovation, collaboration, and discovery, leveraging multidisciplinary approaches to accelerate scientific progress, advance health care, and develop new therapies and cures. The institution's impact extends locally, nationally, and globally through its research, education, patient care, and commitment to serving the public.

Mission

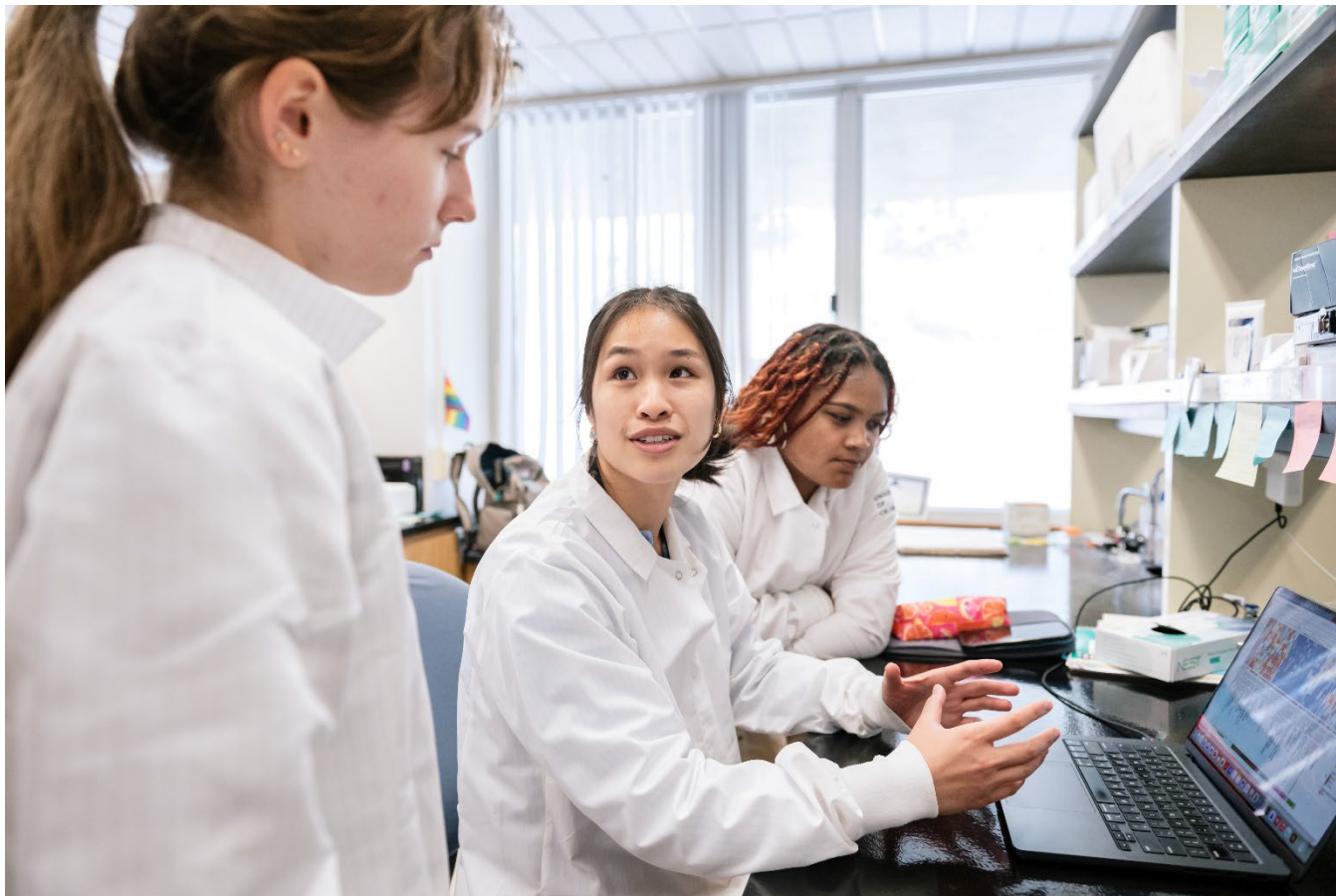
Advancing Health Worldwide

UCSF is the leading university dedicated to advancing health worldwide through preeminent biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. Within its overarching mission, UCSF is devoted at every level to serving the public through innovation, education, discovery, and community engagement.

Values

UCSF's culture is grounded in the [PRIDE values](#):

- **Professionalism**
To be competent, accountable, reliable, and responsible, interacting positively and collaboratively with colleagues, students, patients, visitors, and partners.
- **Respect**
To treat all others with courtesy, kindness, and consideration, creating an environment where all individuals are valued.
- **Integrity**
To be honest, trustworthy, and ethical, always doing the right thing and maintaining the highest standards of conduct.
- **Diversity**
To appreciate and celebrate differences, fostering equity, inclusion, and opportunity for all members of the community.
- **Excellence**
To be dedicated, innovative, and committed to achieving the highest standards in research, education, patient care, and service.



Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as two separate documents, a resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting the University of California, San Francisco in this search. For full consideration, candidate materials should be received by December 1, 2026.

Application materials and nominations should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Suzanne Teer and Ashlee Musser

UCSFExecDirector@wittkieffer.com

The salary that UC San Francisco reasonably expects to pay for this position is \$240,000-\$250,000.

The University of California, San Francisco, is committed to fostering a welcoming and nondiscriminatory workplace. As an equal opportunity employer, we comply with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination. Our goal is to ensure fair treatment and equal employment opportunities for all qualified applicants and employees, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, or other protected status under state or federal law.